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ESPERANTO IN GERMANY.

BY OTTO SIMON.

THE first advocate of Esperanto in Germany was Leopold Einstein, of Nuremberg. From the very beginning he had penetrated the deficiencies of Volapük; but, making the best of it, he espoused the cause of that artificial language until 1888, when a copy of Zamenhof's grammar fell into his hands. Notwithstanding his advanced age and severe bodily afflictions, he became an ardent apostle of Esperanto, and displayed in its service a feverish activity. As late as a few months before his death in 1890 he wrote to Zamenhof: "I am old and sick, and will not live to see the triumph of our beautiful and sacred undertaking. But you will soon, soon witness it in all its glory." The geometrician Trompeter (Schalke) became another champion who made great sacrifices for the propaganda. Zamenhof has repeatedly acknowledged that without the interposition of these two Germans he would have despaired of the success of his work. Then Trompeter also died in 1902, and the first attempts of the Esperanto movement in Germany were soon crushed by the indifference of public opinion. However, Esperanto was no more homeless. France, Sweden and the Bohemian provinces of Austria had already given it admittance, and from foreign countries it had necessarily, sooner or later, to find its way back to Germany.

The first guide was the Bohemian teacher Theodore Cejka, of Bistritz-on-Hostein, who added to his Bohemian "Esperanto Review" a German supplement with correspondence lessons. This review, which Cejka had edited for three years with great sacrifices, long ago ceased publication; but, thanks to its German supplement, there are now German Esperantists to be met in all the towns of Bohemia and Moravia, where more than one

language is spoken. More substantial aid the German Esperanto movement received from Switzerland. Jean Borel, who has devoted much time to the problem of neutral auxiliary language in general and to Volapük in particular, and who also commands thoroughly five modern languages, was won over to Esperanto at the beginning of this century. In 1902, with some fellow spirits, he founded the "Schweizer Esperanto-Gesellschaft," and was elected its vice-president. An extensive tour abroad, which brought him to Hungary, Servia, Rumania, Russia, etc., strengthened him in his view that, notwithstanding his knowledge of many languages, he was in a great part of the civilized world condemned to "numbness and dumbness." He then became thoroughly convinced of the usefulness of Esperanto, because he met in many places Esperantists to whom he could make himself understood only in this new language. He also succeeded in gaining for the new language the interest of his brother, the owner of a publishing business in Berlin, who also published Jean Borel's effective pamphlet for the advancement of Esperanto. A few weeks later, Jean Borel decided to settle permanently in Berlin. In order to push forward the Esperanto movement in Germany he published in November, 1903, a modest monthly, "*Esperantistische Mitteilungen*," which with the beginning of 1905 appeared considerably enlarged under the title: "*Germana Esperantisto*," and brought about the union of all the Esperantists scattered through the country. On this occasion it became apparent that the interest of the public surpassed all expectations; yet even now some Esperantists were unacquainted with the others, and most of the earlier Esperantists believed the movement had entirely died away. Some, it is true, occupied themselves with the language as a private amusement; but for serious work on a large scale they needed a centre, an organ, an organization. Through the "*Esperantistische Mitteilungen*" the rank and file of the movement became acquainted with each other; in Jean Borel they found their organizer. The latter founded, jointly with Professor Schmidt, Mehlich, and Professor Wetekampf, a group in Berlin in 1903, and this example was soon imitated in many other cities. The Esperanto movement, emerging from the period of uncertain grouping and sporadic successes, had arrived at the period of a systematic propaganda.

Although small Esperanto circles had been organized before at Kiel and Gratz, they were not active in making converts. But with the foundation of the Berlin group the ice was broken. After Berlin came Brunswick in February, 1904. A month later was formed in Munich a group whose president, Captain Meier, had organized a quiet but consistent missionary movement as early as 1890. Soon after groups were formed in Hamburg, Frankfort-on-Main and Stuttgart; and, since the beginning of 1905, hardly a month has passed without the foundation of one or two Esperanto societies. At present they number about forty. This result must be valued the more as the German press has until recently been rather unfriendly to the movement. The press either attempted to kill it with silence or indulged in cheap witticisms at its expense. Refutations of malicious articles were often declined. It was, therefore, very important that the Esperantists had at their disposal since January, 1905, a copious monthly organ, "*Germana Esperantisto*," edited by Borel. Since the successes of the two Esperanto congresses (in Boulogne-sur-Mer, in 1905, and Geneva, in 1906), however, the attitude of a part of the German press has been more favorable. The "*Praktische Wegweiser*" and "*Das Echo*," two widely circulated periodicals, are now earnestly taking part in the propaganda, and almost the whole South German press has been won over to the movement by the unceasing efforts of Professor Christaller, of Stuttgart. Besides, many smaller periodicals ("*Mondo*," "*Weltwarte*," "*Handels-Akademie*," "*Deutschlands Jugend*," etc.) regularly devote space to Esperanto.

A conclusive evidence of the fact that Esperanto has not merely found sympathy, but is earnestly studied, is the increase of the Esperanto method-literature. As early as 1888, Einstein had published a German method, which, however, considered the propaganda rather than the pedagogics. He was followed in 1890, by Meier, with the first methodical grammar; by Fried, who in a series of articles had acquainted the harmonizers of systems with the splendid aims of the auxiliary language. A year later appeared the "*Vollständiges Lehrbuch*," a complete method, by Jean Borel, which bears the approbation of Zamenhof, and has since passed through six editions. In the same year appeared, in the popular "*Miniatur-Bibliothek*," a method by Mielck, and soon after a method by Jürgensen. Schröder,

the meritorious honorary president of the Vienna group, wrote in 1905 a methodical grammar which is intended for self-instruction of those who have not a thorough knowledge of the grammar of their mother tongue. Lately have appeared methods by Stark, Mainzer, Stephan Büschel, and last, but not least, Schramm. Special mention should also be made of the dictionaries by Zamenhof and Jürgensen, published in 1905, the third edition of which appeared at the end of 1906.

Meanwhile, the various single groups felt the necessity of coming in closer contact with one another. Under the presidency of Dr. Mybs, of Hamburg, the most influential Esperantists of Germany assembled in May, 1906, at Brunswick. Here an organization, the "Germana Esperantista Societa" was founded, embracing all the Esperantist societies of Germany. The "*Germana Esperantisto*" was selected as the official organ. Dr. Mybs, Drs. Hanauer and Schuck were entrusted with the management of the association. Two Austrians and one Swiss were appointed to the larger board of managers.

Among Germans abroad Esperanto was introduced even before it was promoted in Germany. Thus, in Austria a group exists in almost every large city. The Reichenberg group took part in the German-Bohemian exhibition and was awarded the gold medal. German Switzerland also manifests a favorable disposition toward Esperanto, which was largely influenced by the second international congress, held in Geneva in 1906. The energetic president of the Swiss Esperanto Society, Pastor Schneeberger, from German Switzerland, was chosen chairman of this congress, his election evidencing the high esteem the German Esperantists enjoy in the international Esperanto world. This esteem is further shown by the election of nine German Esperantists to the "Lingva Comitato" (language committee), which has its seat in Paris. This committee was organized by the first Esperanto congress held at Boulogne in 1905, from among the most experienced Esperantists, as the highest authority in linguistic controversies. Barthel, the vice-president of the international lodge of Freemasons; Foerster, Schmidt and Meier belong to the editorial board of the most important scientific periodical, "*Internacia Scienca Revuo*." All the international Esperanto periodicals have Germans as constant contributors. The stenographic system proposed for Esperanto by Schneeberger finds

favor also abroad, and was practically applied at both international congresses. Schuck has given much joy to the pioneers of this movement by his original album of 114 of the best-known Esperantists. Among them are fourteen Germans. The foreign Esperantists have also strongly supported the German propaganda, first of all by the translation of selected works of German literature into Esperanto. The Russians, Devyatnin, Gernet and Kaufmann; the Poles, Kabe, Grabovski and Belmont; the Frenchman Bouçon and the Englishman Cefec, participated in these translations. Cefec has rendered great service to the German propaganda by his pamphlet "*Esperanto-Schlüssel*." Zamenhof has not only paved the way by his wonderful translation of Schiller's "*Robbers*" and single poems of Schiller, Goethe, Uhland and Heine, but has also raised the spirits and confidence of the champions of Esperanto by his visits to the Esperantists of Berlin and Frankfort. Couturat has issued his book, "*La langue auxiliaire internationale*," also in German, and in an article in the "*Deutsche Revue*" has cleared up misunderstandings of the principles of the auxiliary languages that have lately arisen.

The chief obstacle to the German Esperanto movement, apathy, has now been overcome. Only three years ago, at the Berlin meeting, for which thousands of invitations were issued and sent to all teachers, but fifteen persons appeared, although a distinguished scholar, Professor Schmidt, of Potsdam, had been announced as the main speaker; whereas, in November, 1906, Professor Ostwald spoke in Berlin in favor of the Esperanto idea amid the thundering applause of many hundreds; and, a few weeks later, Professor Schmidt treated the same subject before a large and select audience. As late as the nineteenth of April, 1904, Fritz Mauthner could assert in the "*Berliner Tageblatt*" that only faddists occupied themselves with Esperanto. At present this paper from time to time publishes items referring to the movement. The scholars who, with the exception of Ostwald, Foerster, Schmidt and Schuchardt, originally stood aloof from Esperanto, no longer consider it unworthy of notice. Four years ago, an application requesting the Association of the Academies to take an interest in the problem of an international auxiliary language had only four signatures of German scholars; to-day, no less than twenty German scholars are interested. Next after

the report of Schuchardt, who was commissioned by the Vienna Academy to investigate this problem, the chief cause of the advance is the work of Ostwald, who, already in 1903, before the German Ingenieur-Verein at Munich, urged the possibility of an artificial auxiliary language, and in his "*Natur Philosophie*" gave a strictly scientific argument in support of his view, which he defended in "*Die Neue Freie Presse*" in 1904 against the philologist Gomperz. In his lectures at the Salzburg summer high school in 1903, he came out for the first time specifically for Esperanto, which in the next year he recommended at Berlin, Leipsic, Prague, Teplitz and Vienna, as the best solution of the auxiliary language problem. An adroit opponent of the Esperantists arose in the person of Professor Diels, the rector of the Berlin University, who, because of his warnings against Esperanto on the ground that it was injurious to national sentiment, could from the beginning count on the approval of all chauvinists. His reproaches have, however, been met by Schmidt, Couturat and Ostwald in three of the most prominent German periodicals. After all, the chauvinistic prejudice is still widely spread. The same circles that at an earlier stage declined to occupy themselves at all with Esperanto, on the ground of its alleged hopelessness, now see in this neutral auxiliary language a menace to the sacred fortunes of the nation. Other opposition to Esperanto has lately materialized in the newest projectors, who cannot rest through jealousy of Zamenhof's fame; but they cannot succeed and, like Professor Diels, they do their share to enliven the public discussion of the question of the world language and to prevent a dangerous indifferentism.

The confidence which has been placed in Esperanto by the German public manifests itself also in the greater interest accorded to it by the commercial world. A society of merchants, "Progresso," publishes in Frankfort the Esperanto periodical "*Eksport Jurnal*o," a number of manufactured articles bear the trade-mark "Esperanto," and probably the most important sign of the times is the fact that in some commercial schools Esperanto has lately been taught experimentally. Some commercial houses already supplement their announcements with the notice: "Oni korespondas Esperante" ("We correspond in Esperanto"). Some of them even advertise in Esperanto periodicals.

At the very cradle of Esperanto we find, on the one hand, men engaged in industrial pursuits who hope, for practical considerations, that the new method will furnish the future language of commerce; on the other hand, scholars see in it the future language of science. The International Esperanto Association has laid before the scholars and friends of science a declaration in which is expressed the earnest hope that the scientists at the international congresses will always use Esperanto, that articles written in Esperanto will find place in the prominent scientific periodicals, which shall likewise print an index in Esperanto of those articles that appear in the national languages. This declaration was signed by more than fifty learned Germans with academic degrees.

Moreover, the idealists hope that Esperanto may serve as a conqueror, or at least as a mitigator, of national animosities, as an instrument to conciliate the nations and to establish universal brotherhood. Some may go a little too far in their keen anticipations, but they have a perfect right to point out that the furtherance of mutual love among the nations was the real guiding star that Zamenhof followed in elaborating his great work. They can also point to the fact that, notwithstanding political differences of the day, the German Esperantists have always met with hearty and friendly sentiments among the various nations and creeds. Not often in the history of the world have idealists and practical workers united so closely in common activity as they have now in advancing Esperanto in Germany; and even if the first steps of the Germans were timorous and uncertain, the dangers incident to the infancy of the cause have been overcome, and the international Esperanto congress which is about to meet on German soil will prove to all the world that the Germans have done their duty in this beneficent movement.

OTTO SIMON.